



**Humboldt County Visitors Bureau
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

MINUTES

Thursday, September 1, 2022

Present: Libby Maynard, Jeff Durham, Ara Pachmayer, Justin Legge, Chris Ambrosini, Lowell Daniels, Jenny Early, Ken Hamik, Shannon Hughes, Aaron Ostrom, Marc Rowley, *Ex officio*, Julie Benbow, Kyle Abelli-Amen, *Staff:* Jason Baxter, *Marketing Consultant*, Supervisor Michelle Bushnell, Dianna Rios, *County Liaison*
Absent: Paul Beatie, Sam Wedll,

- I. Libby called the meeting to order at 11:35 am.
 - o Directors checked in.

- II. Public Comment
 - o Laura asked for clarification: comments for agenda or non-agenda items?
 - o As per Brown Act, non agenda now, then comments as for each agenda item, limited to three minutes.
 - o There were no comments on non-agenda items.

(Due to Libby's internet problems, Jeff took over the meeting)

- III. Approval of Minutes of August 4th meeting
 - o Action Item
 - Ken made the motion to approve the minutes as submitted.
 - Jeff seconded the motion.
 - There were no additions, corrections, or comments.
 - The motion to approve the minutes as submitted was passed unanimously.

IV. Board Committee Reports

Executive Committee

Julie reported that at the August 16th meeting, review of EOY Financials and reviewed the draft working budget for 22/23.

Finance

Julie Directors received the 21/22 Financial Report with a short narrative highlighting the marketing dollar investments, and some unique income (COVID PPP etc.). Noted that the statement contains many GL codes and line items that are no longer relevant.

Due to budget restraints, only attended one consumer (B2C) Travel Show – The Bay Area Travel & Adventure Show – in conjunction with the North Coast Tourism Council, a co-

operative marketing group. The four counties (Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino and Lake) each pay \$11K per year and the total is matched by Visit California. J submitted 22/23 funding application in May, and we were awarded \$44K, for a total marketing budget of \$88K for North of Ordinary CA. This allows us to capture a much wider audience by promoting the whole area to the national and state drive market. There were no comments or questions.

- Approval of the 21/22 Financial Statement.

Jeff made the motion to approve the 21/22 Financial Statement as submitted.

Ken seconded the motion.

The motion to approve the 21/22 Financial Statement as submitted was passed unanimously.

The financials are posted on the website.

22/23 Draft Budget: Julie noted that the budget makes some assumptions to increase income, specifically to invest marketing endeavors, which is necessary for the survival of the Bureau. Currently have two expensive contracts, the website (\$35K) and the CPA, both will be renegotiated. Bureau has a commitment to sponsor Old Steeple/KEET TV for \$13K (52 spots, 13 episodes). These three contracts bring the projected expenses \$75K over the current income. Looking to raise revenue from sponsorships and county-wide partnerships. 3-6 months to secure the funding.

- Approval of the FY 22/23 Budget.

Jeff made the motion to approve the 22/23 Budget as submitted.

Shannon seconded the motion.

There were no comments.

The motion to approve the 22/23 Budget as submitted was passed unanimously.

Libby reminded the Board that the budget is a working document that can be updated or amended, with Board approval.

Advocacy / Funding

Jeff reported that he proposed the Board establish an advocacy position and developed a list of requirements and expectations. Very much needed, to be more proactive rather than reactive. As an example, cited a recent call when the county commented that possible ARPA funding available to support a future Visitors Center in SoHum. That could have been an opportunity to engage with the County to ensure that if funding was available that the Bureau was included. (The Bureau had applied for this funding and been denied.)

Staff already do a lot of advocacy, however always an opportunity for an extra set of ears/eyes to ensure that Bureau is kept front and center with the County, and keep updated with all important issues. As seen in the budget, County funding is not sufficient, an advocate can help.



Libby invited volunteers for this position.

Lowell proposed that the Executive Committee develop a list of candidates. It was agreed that this will be done at the next EC meeting.



Marketing

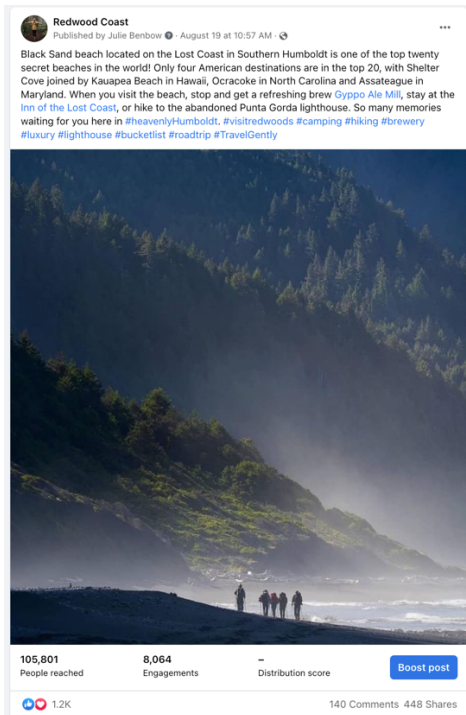
Libby asked for public comment. There were no comments on the analytics.

Jason reported on Facebook and Instagram for past 28 days: Incredible Facebook numbers (reach increase 559.2%) mostly due to the popularity of the "Black Sand Beach" post seen below, organically reaching over 105K people with 448 shares.

Facebook Page reach 
119,327  559.2%




Instagram reach 
11,414  17.2%

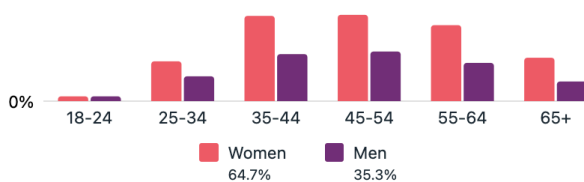



Audience

Facebook Page likes 


56,315

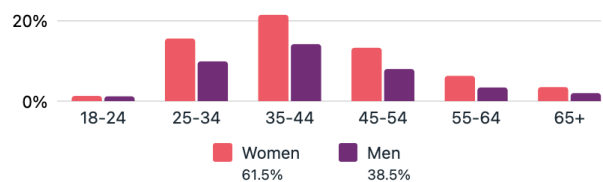
Age & gender 



Instagram followers 

13,484

Age & gender 



Top five Facebook cities are ideal collection of potential tourists within drivable distance: Redding, Sacramento, LA, Portland, and San Francisco.

Instagram shows a consistent mix of local and tourist viewers. From a tourism point-of-view, prefer to see Redding and nearby cities like Santa Rosa break into Instagram's top five mix by the end of the year. Need to consider budgeting for targeted ads for Q4 events, specifically for these regions, and definitely increase the investment to targeted areas and demographics.

VisitRedwoods.com Stats – August 1- August 30, 2022

118K+ pageviews from 54K+ users • 48% male / 52 % female

Top 10 US City Users

	51,338 % of Total: 94.01% (54,607)
1. San Francisco	3,655 (6.34%)
2. San Jose	3,533 (6.12%)
3. Los Angeles	2,684 (4.65%)
4. Sacramento	2,568 (4.45%)
5. (not set)	1,746 (3.03%)
6. Eureka	1,712 (2.97%)
7. Arcata	1,702 (2.95%)
8. Seattle	1,532 (2.66%)
9. New York	833 (1.44%)
10. Chicago	743 (1.29%)

The Bureau was contracted by Ferndale Chamber to do their social media for a trial run of three months.

August 3-August 30 - Page Reach:

Facebook = 31,319 (+220.1%) • Instagram = 3,504 (+74%). Just a \$100 investment in reached 14,000 people with 565 clicks to the Humboldt County Fair website. Those are real people with real money to spend, so potential to expand reach with a larger investment is great.

Julie One of Ferndale's challenges (as with many county social media) was they were talking to themselves, their reach being predominantly Ferndale, Fortuna, and Eureka. The Bureau's goal is to extend the engagements beyond the county and track who and where, then target them.

Diana asked if the Bureau will offer this service to other areas/towns, or if we are training them to take over.

Julie Social media will be part of a 422 marketing package offered, however it will be fee-based as the Bureau is not in the position to take on any more obligations due to staff and budget. Proposals will be based on what the Bureau can bring and its value to the destination. Many chambers of commerce do social media and website, and other areas/towns have hired individuals or companies to do their media for them. Many organizations do not have any professional marketing staff or expertise, and that is what the Bureau brings.

Julie Third e-newsletter was sent to 31K subscribers, 50%+ out of state, includes media and writers. Featured five items (culture, outdoor adventure, local experience) and initiated a new item - The Bite - featuring a culinary story – this month was oysters.

Public Comment:

Natalynne DeLapp spoke of confusion over the Facebook and Instagram addresses. Does not see the Redwood Skywalk on the Bureau website.

Julie Skywalk is on the website, and has received considerable press/media for it which has been shared on Facebook.

Map & Guide:

Jeff - Protocol is presentation of topic, Board discussion then public comment.

Julie reported that the Bureau did not update the map & guide in 20/21 during the pandemic. In May 2022 started to update the guide content and listings, using the same 26-page template, balance between lists and features of Humboldt highlights and best things to do for the visitor, and some businesses. Information needed updating as some businesses closed and did not reopen and there were some omissions. M&G intended to be a comprehensive guide of everything in the county but in order to be more inclusive, it was decided all relevant websites for the chambers and areas would be listed so visitors can access more local information. Currently have 34 ads reserved and, as don't have the sales staff, we invited businesses from the previous issue to advertise again. I've been working with Garberville (Leann, Jenny, then Yvonne), Willow Creek (Shannon), Orick (Donna) Ferndale (Paul & Thomas), Eureka (Swan), to ensure

information is accurate. Have had a couple of conversations with Laura (SHBVB),but have not yet connected with Fortuna.

Last week, the Bureau received a letter from the County CAO requesting we pause activities on the map & guide and not send it for printing until the County and other marketing contractors, departments, stakeholders, officials, and community agencies have been given an adequate opportunity to collaborate and provide feedback.

Unsure if people know the history of the brochure and its development, but it is not a complete listing of everything and place. It is expensive to print and distribute and is a significant amount of Bureau budget.

Jenny – been corresponding with Julie. Garberville’s brochure was late coming out due to some issues. Asked Yvonne (ED) to reach out and ask if we would have the opportunity to review it before printing. Want to advocate for Southern Humboldt and understand that featuring the best of Humboldt, we asked for some edits and additions that we feel is important, like Paradise Bike Trail, and the Music Festival which brings in a lot of visitors, and then more dining options than the Benbow Inn.

Julie Have been working with Yvonne and integrating your additions into the text, however we are unable to do comprehensive lists of all the restaurants and dining options, but linking with the Chamber sites.

Jenny, as Chambers are membership organizations, sites only have member information. Really appreciate the opportunity to make additions before it goes to print.

Jeff asked for clarification if the County expects all municipalities to have input.

Supervisor Bushnell referred to the County/Bureau MOU and the County’s desire for the Bureau to work with all municipalities, and information representing the county should reflect all the communities – to this end need to de-silo and work together. Stakeholders and entities would like to know that the information is correct.

Jeff asked who the final arbiter is before it gets printed. How many commercial listings and who decides.

Supervisor Bushnell responded that the Bureau should decide and communicate the information to the community. She noted that, as Garberville Chamber Board President in 2020*¹, there was incorrect information in the Map & Guide. This was brought to the BOS by a community member at the December 10th 2020*, suggestion from the BOS was for the Bureau to establish a committee of representatives from different areas to review the information. Not sure how you gather the information and am curious. The Board Meetings are recorded if need clarification.

Julie told the Board that she does not remember being tasked with establishing a committee to review content. Julie reiterated that she had recently solicited input from Gateway Chambers of commerce. Julie recalled previous professional experience as head of a design/marketing company in San Francisco working on major publications, the M&G has finite space, and the process illuminated the fact that the county is silo-ed with some areas wanting more information. Humboldt is 14th largest county on California and there is no way to give everyone an equal voice. However, if rather than dictating the content, we put ourselves in the position of the visitors and ask what information they

¹ The meeting was December 2019.

want, it will not be a list of every restaurant, coffeeshop and available accommodations in the county. A committee can be convened to discuss the content for the next issue. Diana stated that the County does want a M&G but with content feedback from the community then Bureau can put it together. Want it printed and accurate based on the feedback to the committee. County has not seen a committee or a report, and needs to. So not getting that feedback.

Julie asked if reaching out to the Chambers of commerce is not enough.

Jenny noted that a letter was sent to the Bureau **December 5th 2019**, from Garberville Chamber asking for corrections to be made. Followed up only recently.

Chris This M&G has a budget and in past years, always had comments from areas like Southern Humboldt, eastern part of the county. Need to remember that guide is for potential visitors coming to the County, can't put everything in unless make it into a book. Realistically look at the county assets and highlight the best. In future, maybe do it by region with a committee representative and they decide what assets to feature from their region and community. Cannot list all 40 restaurants in Eureka etc, and as Lowell and Marc will agree, had this discussion many times over the years.

Public Comment:

Natalynne DeLapp Speaking as a community member with a keen interest in tourism. Question, understand that cities and towns not contributing to the HCVB but many visitor attractions in those locations, so how is Bureau working with the chambers? Chambers not represented on this Board. Different aspect like agriculture and culinary, how are the represented? This is the most robust county visitor guide and needs to as inclusive as possible.

Laura Had this discussion before – have been requesting, for the past couple of years, for the County to do a comprehensive assessment of their tourism assets, if this had been done, we'd know what needs to be included in the guide. SoHum Community has let it be known that there is a lot of information missing, brought it to the HCVB board in 2018 and 2019, failed to change, brought it in front of BOS in December 2019. Why did this fall through the cracks, even with County representation on the HCVB Board. Bureau not representing SoHum on the website. Failed for Southern Humboldt and a fail for Humboldt County economy.

Julie reminded the Board that in early 2019, Eureka withdrew its funding support and the HCVB Director passed away and the Bureau Board, staff and operations were severely challenged. In March 2020 the pandemic closed business down. The current Bureau budget of \$205K supports the minimum of marketing, staff and operations. Julie apologized for any projects or expectations that had not been met. The M&G is just one element of the marketing that the Bureau does, SoHum is promoted – most recently in the August newsletter (Gyppo Ale Mill) and on Facebook & Instagram (Black Sands Beach), at the same time promoting other assets across the county. Happy to work with anyone on this – respecting that limited time. Want to develop a quality product that will entice and engage visitors, that we are proud of. Asked for direction of the next steps.

Jenny – love to see a committee to get information and feedback and be part of a committee.

Jeff – Unfortunate that BOS made the request December 2019 and no follow up by the County Bureau liaison. Let's put together a committee and need to move onward.

Supervisor Bushnell reiterated that this language is in the MOU and has been, maybe send the contract to the Board members. I received comments from some constituents and that is why I reached out to you. Let's work together to get this M&G right.

Shannon – working well with Julie updating the Willow Creek content.

V: County Update

There was no County update.

VI: Other Business

Jeff offered his formal resignation as an HCVB Board Member. He noted that these are the same discussions the county was having 15 years ago, and he serves on many boards and committees, that this is the most diverse, experienced and positive Board. Sad to see all the HCVB work being questioned because of everyone's agendas and silos. He thanked the directors for their commitment.

On behalf of the Board, Libby thanks Jeff for his leadership and hard work.

(Jenny noted that Julie had been responsive to her emails.)

Julie personally thanked Jeff for sharing his professional expertise and care for the health and wellbeing of the county, and for working with, and supporting, Fortuna – which is one area that often do not get public recognition even though they do have some great visitor and resident assets.

Julie stated that, if the Bureau, as the County DMMO, was funded to the degree it should be, these discussions would not happen – there would be a designated staff person to work as community and stakeholder liaison, one working on the M&G. So, expectations as business people should be tempered by the size of investment into tourism - one the main economic revenue generators for the county.

Lowell – in order to keep things going right, advised that public comments at the end of the agenda item. But we having public comment as part of the Board discussions.

Diana – will send out an update to the Brown Act, and choose a date for a Brown Act training.

Libby stated that the Bureau is doing the best job it can.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:07 pm.

This are the comments from the meeting, recorded in Zoom Chat:

- 11:55:34 From iPhoneken : Our Marketing Committee. Setting up a meeting next week.
- 12:02:12 From Justin Legge : KOA not HLA (Kampgrounds of America)
- 12:12:46 From Natalynne DeLapp : What is the Facebook page?
- 12:12:58 From Justin Legge : <https://www.facebook.com/RedwoodCoast>
- 12:13:05 From Jenny : Redwood Coast
- 12:15:31 From Natalynne DeLapp : Thank you @Jenny. Is this not one of the Bureau's facebook pages too? <https://www.facebook.com/visithumboldtca>
- 12:22:43 From Jason : <https://www.instagram.com/redwoodcoaster/>
- 12:32:07 From Natalynne DeLapp : Where on the website is the Skywalk listed?
- 12:41:53 From Natalynne DeLapp : Is there an opportunity for the "public" to review what goes into that visitors guide before it is published? There are a number of businesses that are "new-ish" that are part of the best. How are you working with the Eureka Chamber of Commerce? And has cannabis ever been included? Perhaps Humboldt Cannabis Tours?
- 12:49:32 From Natalynne DeLapp : Are cities within the county?
- 12:52:34 From Libby Maynard (she/her) : Incorporated cities are not
- 12:53:03 From Michelle Bushnell Supervisor : Sorry guys Dec 10 2019 BOS meeting
- 13:01:46 From Melissa Sanderson, NCJ, Inc. : Speaking on behalf of the Fortuna Chamber Vice Chair, the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce wasn't contacted
- 13:02:19 From Laura Lasseter : the website link is an easy fix asap....please
- 13:02:54 From Laura Lasseter : the county needs to access their own assets
- 13:03:46 From Libby Maynard (she/her) : I think you mean assess their assets?
- 13:04:22 From Natalynne DeLapp : @Diana Rios, the county needs to fund a "Tourism Assets Assessment"
- 13:05:11 From Natalynne DeLapp : Hire an outside contractor to do a complete assessment that looks at current and proposed assets, with a landuse planning component.
- 13:06:07 From Laura Lasseter : Exactly!
- 13:06:25 From Natalynne DeLapp : Given that there has not been a map and guide produced for the past two years, why has an overarching strategy been developed in the off time?
- 13:10:57 From Libby Maynard (she/her) : You are welcome to come back anytime.
- 13:11:15 From Michelle Bushnell Supervisor : thank you Jeff , for all your work
- 13:15:32 From Melissa Sanderson, NCJ, Inc. : I'd be happy to help.